

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7756

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH LABOR MINISTER FERNANDO  
SUAREZ GONZALES

SUMMARY: FERNANDO SUAREZ, LABOR MINISTER AND A LEADING CABINET  
APERTURISTA, EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE PRINCE WOULD MOVE COUNTRY  
TOWARDS PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATIZATION IN MEASURED EVOLUTIONARY  
FASHION, WITHOUT TEARING DOWN REGIME STRUCTURES. RAPID DISMANTLING  
DESIRED BY OPPOSITION WOULD PROVOKE A STRONG REACTION AMONG ALL  
THOSE MODERATES AND HARDLINERS ALIKE--WHO HAVE BEEN  
ASSOCIATED WITH THE REGIME. HE FELT PRINCE WAS LIKELY TO KEEP  
PRIMIN ARIAS ON FOR TRANSITION BUT WOULD MAKE EXTENSIVE CHANGES  
IN CABINET. KEY TO LIBERALIZATION WOULD BE MARCH CORTES  
ELECTIONS, AFTER WHICH HE HOPED NECESSARY REFORMS COULD BE  
PURSUED VIA LEGISLATION. SUAREZ STRESSED THAT DEMANDS OF  
DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION THAT SUCCESSOR REGIME SHOULD LEGALIZE  
COMMUNIST PARTY WERE TOTALLY UNREALISTIC. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING LUNCH AT RESIDENCE NOV 4, LABOR MINISTER FERNANDO  
SUAREZ GONZALEZ COMMENTED EXTENSIVELY ON THE SUCCESSION AND  
OTHER TOPICS. SUAREZ IS ALSO 3RD VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVT WITH  
COORDNATING RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOVT'S LABOR AND SOCIAL POLICIES  
AND IS RECOGNIZED AS A REGIME LIBERALIZER AND AS ONE OF THE MOST  
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APERTURISTA CABINET MINISTERS.

2. SUAREZ FELT PRINCE WOULD KEEP PRIME MINISTER ARIAS ON FOR THE TRANSITION BUT FELT PRINCE WOULD ALSO BE LIKELY TO HAVE ARIAS MAKE EXTENSIVE CHANGES AMONG CABINET. SUAREZ DISCOUNTED MOTRICO AS PRIME MINISTER BECAUSE IT WOULD ANTAGONIZE A GREAT MANY WITHIN REGIME UPON WHOM PRINCE MUST RELY FOR SUPPORT. FRAGA WAS ALSO UNLIKELY BUT HAD A BETTER CHANCE TO BECOME THE PRINCE'S SECOND PRIME MINISTER AFTER ARIAS.

3. THE PRINCE WOULD MOVE THE COUNTRY TOWARDS THE PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATIZATION WHICH MOST SPANIARDS DESIRE, BUT WOULD HAVE TO DO IT IN A VERY MEASURED, STEADY, AND EVOLUTIONARY FASHION. THIS MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH REFORM AND WITHOUT TEARING DOWN REGIME STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS. TOO ABRUPT A CHANGE WOULD MAKE ALL THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH THE REGIME FEEL THREATENED. THE OPPOSITION'S HOPES FOR RAPID DISMANTLING OF REGIME INSTITUTIONS WERE FALSE AND DANGEROUS, BECAUSE RAPID DISMANTLING WOULD PROVOKE NOT ONLY THE ULTRA RIGHT, WHICH WAS A STRONG FORCE IN ITSELF, BUT ALSO THE VAST NUMBERS OF PERSONS IN SPAIN WHO HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER WITH THE REGIME. HE CITED HIMSELF, TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER THE CIVIL WAR, AS A PERSON WHO HAD ALWAYS ASPIRED TO MORE DEMOCRACY FOR SPAIN. HIS FATHER HAD EVEN BEEN JAILED FOR INSULTING THE NAZIS DURING WORLD WAR II, BUT HE WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO COME TO THE DEFENSE OF THE REGIME IF A SPIRIT OF REVENGE WERE TO PREVAIL AMONG THE SPANISH OPPOSITION.

4. WHEN ASKED WHAT TYPE OF GESTURE THE NEW KING COULD MAKE TOWARDS THE MODERATE OPPOSITION, SUAREZ SAID THAT THE PRINCE'S FIRST MAJOR SPEECH WOULD BE VITALLY IMPORTANT, HE SHOULD SET A DEFINITE CALENDAR WHICH WOULD LEAD SPAIN TO MORE DEMOCRATIC FORMS. LESSER ACTIONS, SUCH AS AN "INDULTO" (COMMUTATION OF SENTENCES) FOR PRISONERS EXCEPT THOSE INVOLVED IN "CRIMES OF BLOOD" ARE ALSO LIKELY.

5. A STEPPED-UP PROGRAM CONTINUING THE SPIRIT OF TYWAS' FEB 12, 1974 PROGRAM IS WHAT IS REALISTICALLY POSSIBLE. THE KEY TO SUCH REFORMS WOULD BE THE MARCH 1976 CORTES ELECTIONS, IT IS RIDICULOUS FOR THE OPPOSITION TO SUGGEST DISMANTLING OF THE CORTES, BUT THE NEW GOVT MUST DO ITS UTMOST TO SOMEWHAT CHANGE THE CORTES' CONFIDENTIAL

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COMPOSITION IN THE MARCH ELECTIONS. COMPLETELY FREE ELECTIONS, UNDER THE PRESENT RULES, FOR FAMILY MEMBERS, NATIONAL COUNCILORS OF THE MOVEMENT, AND OTHER CORTES SECTORS, WOULD PROBABLY BE SUFFICIENT TO INSURE THAT A NEW GROUP OF SINCERE APERTURISTAS WOULD REPLACE MANY OF THE CURRENT, CONSERVATIVE CORTES DIEHARDS. THIS GREATLY EXPANDED NUCLEUS OF APERTURISTAS WOULD WORK WITH THE PRINCE AND GOVT. A SMALL BUT VOCAL GROUP OF FRANQUIST DIEHARDS WOULD SURVIVE IN THE CORTES AND WOULD SEEK TO OBSTRUCT

LIBERALIZATION, BUT A MUCH LARGER FLOATING GROUP WOULD SUPPORT THE PRINCE AND THE APERTURISTAS OUT OF OPPORTUNISM. THE GOVT COULD ACHIEVE, BY MEANS OF LEGISLATION, THE NECESSARY REFORMS. SUAREZ HOPED THE EXISTING POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS WOULD PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE.

6. RE LEGALIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, SUAREZ SAID THAT WHILE HE FULLY ACCEPTED THE PRINCIPLE THAT DEMOCRATIC MODERATE OPPOSITION GROUPS WOULD HAVE TO BE ALLOWED POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AT SOME POINT IN THE RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE, HE FELT IT WAS UNREALISTIC OF THE OPPOSITION TO KEEP INSISTING ON LEGALIZATION OF THE SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCE). HE WOULD OPPOSE LEGALIZATION UNLESS THE NATURE OF COMMUNISM CHANGED.

7. I ASKED ABOUT THE RECENT DETENTION OF SOCIALISTS AND OTHER MODERATE OPPOSITIONISTS, WHICH DID NOT APPEAR TO REFLECT THE LIBERAL INTENTIONS OF THE PRINCE AND THE GOVT. SUAREZ REPLIED THAT MINISTER OF GOVT GARCIA HERNANDEZ IS BY NO MEANS THE REACTIONARY THAT MANY THINK. IT WAS DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, FOR THE POLICEMAN IN THE STREET--USED TO HAVING HIS RATHER ARBITRARY WAY FOR SOME 35 YEARS, TO REFLECT THE MORE ENLIGHTENED ATTITUDE IN THE HIGHER LEVELS OF GOVT. HE CITED NOV 1974 ARRESTS OF 14 PROMINENT MODERATE OPPOSITION LEADERS OF THE "PLATAFORMA DE CONVERGENCIA" AS AN INSTANCE WHERE THE HIGHER OFFICIALS DID NOT KNOW ABOUT THESE EMBARRASSING ARRESTS UNTIL AFTER THEY HAD BEEN MADE.

8. RE LABOR, SUAREZ SAID IT WAS NOTABLE THAT DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS THERE HAS BEEN VERY LITTLE STRIKE ACTIVITY, WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO THE WORSENING ECONOMIC SITUATION AND STEADILY INCREASING UNEMPLOYMENT, SINCE WORKERS' FEAR LOSING THEIR JOBS IN AN INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT JOB MARKET. ON FUTURE OF THE GOVT-CONTROLLED SPANISH SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION (SSO), SUAREZ

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CLAIMED THE WORKER UNITY WHICH THE SSO EMBODIES MUST BE MAINTAINED. WE POINTED OUT THAT THE PCE ALSO CALLS FOR WORKER UNITY AND THAT IT IS THE PCE'S INTENTION TO TAKE OVER THE SSO FROM BELOW, BUT NOTED THAT DEMOCRATIC LABOR GROUPS, ON THE OTHER HAND, CALL FOR LABOR PLURALISM. SUAREZ THEN FUDGED A BIT AND SAID THE SSO IN THE FUTURE SHOULD MAINTAIN LABOR UNITY BUT ALLOW PLURALISM WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION IN THE FORM OF SYNDICAL ASSOCIATIONS AT A LOWER LEVEL. SUAREZ ALSO CALLED FOR MAJOR CHANGES IN THE SSO STRUCTURE: (A) IT SHOULD BE DIVORCED FROM GOVT; AND (B) THERE SHOULD BE SEPARATION BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND WORKER COMPONENTS.

9. DURING THE CONVERSATION, SUAREZ ASKED ME ABOUT THE US ATTITUDE. I TOLD HIM THE US SUPPORTED EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE TOWARD A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY, ONE THAT WOULD ENCOMPASS THE DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS OF THE NATION BUT WOULD NOT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE COMMUNISM.

NISTS. WE ALSO RECOGNIZED THE CONSTRAINTS AND THE NEED TO PROCEED IN A WAY THAT WOULD NOT PROVOKE POLARIZATION AND UNHINGE THE PROCESS. I TOLD SUAREZ WE WERE IN TOUCH WITH ALL RESPECTABLE POLITICAL GROUPS, INCLUDING THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION. SUAREZ INTERJECTED THAT THIS WAS EVERY GOOD AND MANY WERE HIS FRIENDS. I SHOULD ADD THAT SUAREZ' REMARKS POINT UP THE POTENTIAL TENSION BETWEEN OPPOSITION DESIRES FOR QUICK CHANGE AND REGIME DESIRES TO ACCELERATE, BUT NOT MARKEDLY CHANGE THE CURRENT COURSE. FINDING A MIDDLE GROUND WILL BE A TRICKY PROCESS.  
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